

National English Essay Contest

Almost 300 students from all over the country recently competed in a National Essay Contest sponsored by the English Language Teachers of Macedonia and the U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers working in Macedonia. The essays consisted of between 350 to 500 words written in English.

Students competed in 3 categories: 7th & 8th grades, 1st and 2nd years of high school, and 3rd & 4th years of high school. For each category there were 6 regional winners and from the regional winners was chosen one national champion per age-group. The National Champions are Ana Marija Chklovskova in 8th grade at Todor Angelevski School in Bitola, Vanja Kitanova in 1st year at Jane Sandanski High School in Strumica, and Markona Duceska in 4th year at SOU Gostivar.

The goals of the contest were to raise awareness of the importance of good English writing skills, motivate students to create thoughtful English essays, and support teachers in their ability to teach essay writing. This year the students were asked to write about **“My Life—My Passion”**. Not surprisingly, the students' passions were represented in a wide variety of ways including sports, music, art, family, friendships, pets, politics and education. Frequently students reflected on the fact that they'd never before thought about what was important to them and were grateful for the opportunity to express their thoughts.

This is the sixth time the contest has run in Macedonia, but the first time that essays were submitted electronically. Contest details and announcements were hosted on Face Book encouraging students and teachers to use digital media. All essays were graded anonymously by a judge from a different region using a rubric to ensure fairness. Each student received a Certificate of Participation and regional winners were announced on Face Book and received additional Certificates of Recognition. The three National Champions, their teachers and school Directors were invited to the Peace Corps office in Skopje on March 2nd to receive their awards from the Peace Corps Country Director Stephen Kutzy. Additionally the three lucky students Ana Marija Chklovskova, Vanja Kitanova and Markona Duceska were taken to the United States Embassy for a tour and to be congratulated by Deputy Chief of Mission Brian Aggeler.

E.L.T.A.M. and Peace Corps Volunteers are already planning to make National Essay Contest bigger and better in 2012.